

# *Aeneid* and *Orlando Furioso*:

## The 'Political' travels over the Sea Space

# Philosophical Models



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# Political Helmsmen

“ for the true pilot it is necessary to pay careful attention to year, seasons, heaven, stars... and everything that’s proper to the art, if he is really going to be skilled at ruling a ship.”  
(Plato, *The Republic*, book VI, d-e)



## Political Helmsmen (cont.)

“just as a sailor is one of a number of partners, so, we assert, is the citizen. Although sailors are dissimilar in their capacities, (one is a rower, another is a pilot, another a lookout[...]) it is clear that the most precise account of their virtue will be that peculiar to each sort individually, but that a common account will in a similar way fit all. For the preservation of the ship in its voyage is the work of all of them, and each of the sailors strives for this.” (Aristotle, *Politics*, III, iv)

# Political Helmsmen (cont.)

“Even as we see in a ship, where her divers duties and their divers purposes are ordained for one sole end, that is, to bring her by a safe course to the desired haven; where, as each officer performs his own duty with regard to its proper end, so there is one person who considers all of these, and adapts them all to the final end, and this one is the pilot, whose voice all must obey.” (Alighieri, *The banquet*, IV, iv).

# Political Helmsmen (cont.)

- According to Plato, the Helmsman stands as a metaphor of the ruler, the political soul of the city.
- Aristotle, on the other hand, maintains that he is merely a State co-worker.
- Finally, Dante claims that the Helmsman can even represent the Emperor himself.

# What about Virgil and Ariosto?



# Political Space

- Carl Schmitt: “i grandi atti primordiali del diritto restano [...] localizzazioni legate alla terra. [...] il diritto internazionale è occupazione di terra, fondazione di città, fortificazione, guerre, prigionie, servitù, illibertà, ritorni dalla prigionia.”
- [the great primordial acts of law are localizations tied to earth [...] international law is land occupation, city foundation, wars, slavery, prison, illiberty, return from prison]

C. Schmitt, *Il Nomos della terra*, Adelphi, Milano  
1991, 22.

# *Aeneid* as a political text

“For years

They wandered as their destiny drove them  
on

from one sea to the next: so hard and huge  
a task it was to found the Roman people.”

(*Aeneid*, I, 46-49)

# *Aeneid* as a political text: the “Middleness”

- Mediterranean: *medium* for political means: Lavinia as Land to conquer and to build upon
- “This amalgam of foreign auxiliaries suggests what Epic sees to be the dangerous excess of the East” (Quint, 26)

# *Aeneid* as a political text: the “Middleness” (cont.)

- “Virgil’s epic ideology [...] is calling for both emperor and empire [because] the very vastness of Rome’s conquered territories now demanded political consolidation both abroad and at home.” (Quint, 27)
- Palinurus is the “head of the ship of State” (Quint, 86)

# The Dissimulation

- “Machiavelli is everywhere in the *Furioso*. [...] *Orlando Furioso* would be neither possible nor necessary apart from Machiavelli’s political scheme” (Mazzotta, *Cosmopoiesis*, 27-28)



# Ariosto's Helmsmen (cont.)

Nocchiero di Logistilla: "Saggio [...] dotto" (X, 44, 8):

"At first sight [...] Wonder and reverence are the emotions that Logistilla excites; on further contemplations of her fathomless presence, all other good dwindles to little value[...] She will teach you more alluring preoccupations than music and dancing, perfumes, baths, and fine fare" (X, 46, 14, 47, 1-2)

# Ariosto's Helmsmen (cont.)

- Olimpia:

“Ma presupongo  
ancor ch'or ora  
arrivi nochier che  
per pietà di qui mi  
porti;/e così lupi,  
orsi, leoni  
schivi,/strazi, disagi  
et altre orribil  
morti” (X, 30, 1-4).



XI, 30-45

# Ariosto's Helmsmen (cont.)

- Canto X: marinari, compagni, gente;
- Canto XVII: padrone antiquo;
- Canto XXVIII: nauta (Isabella unshielded...)

# Ariosto's Helmsmen (cont.)

Un caso di crisi d'identità:

Canti XVIII-XX: patron, padrone, nocchiero

Canto XIX, 53: "Rimedio a questo il buon  
nocchier ritruova";

Canto XIX, 56: "il padron non sa pigliar  
consiglio"

# Ariosto's Helmsmen (cont.)

- Helmsman and Rinaldo (Canto XLIII, 52):  
They appear very much attuned. Agreement, harmony.
- Are they two out of the three souls of Platonic *Republic*? Are we to understand that Ariosto is closing Plato's cycle?



# Ariosto's Helmsmen

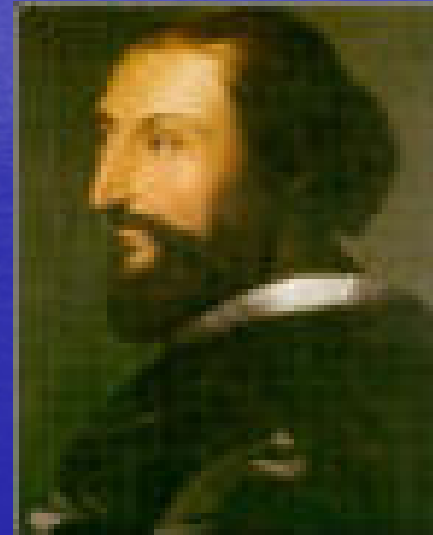
- Wise:

“Tra lor di ciò parlando, al  
nocchier nacque/ un pensiero,  
e lo disse; e a tutti piacque...”

(XLIII, 186, 6-7)

# Ariosto's Helmsmen (cont.)

- Now if my chart tells me true,  
the harbour will soon be in sight  
and I may hope to fulfil my vow  
ashore to One who has  
accompanied me on so long a  
voyage. Oh, how I had paled at  
the prospect of returning with  
but a crippled ship, or perhaps  
wandering forever! But I think I  
see... Yes I do see land, I see  
the welcoming shore (XLVI, 1,  
1-8)



# Helmsmen and alike

- Wise and able to take the Καίσιός;
- Talented in their art;
- Strong;
- Educative;
- Pair dignity.
- When confused, not helmsmen;
- Unlucky (Friar 'Nauta');
- Owner;
- Unskillful;
- Deceitful.

# To be continued...

- “the truth that Machiavelli did not understand but Ariosto lucidly understood. The power over others that *The Prince* pursues has its own irresistible fascination. But for Ariosto, who follows Seneca in this, the pursuit into the outside world is madness, *Furor...*” (Mazzotta, 38)